

Police Complaints Information Bulletin

Force Commentary Sheet

Reporting Period: Reporting Period: 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

Commentary:

Norfolk and Suffolk have a Joint Professional Standards Department. Some of our commentary is relevant to both Forces and some is individual to the specific Constabulary.

Norfolk and Suffolk welcome the publication of the first Police Complaints Information Bulletin from the IOPC since the introduction of significant changes in legislation in February 2020.

In preparation for the changes a number of work streams were identified to ensure that each Force was in a position to maximise the benefits of changes in legislation and embrace the continuing move away from a culture of blame in favour of a culture which welcomes complaints as a mechanism to identify areas for learning and improvement.

The emphasis now is very much 'Listen, Say Sorry, Fix it'. That is not to say there is not more to do to improve processes and embed true learning.

Norfolk and Suffolk have recognised that the legislative changes and the detailed data provided enables Forces to understand better the specific areas for dissatisfaction and can ultimately feed the change. This has, however, come at a cost, and has placed additional demand on both a small team within Professional Standards and complaint handlers across the two Forces.

In turn this has impacted timeliness in dealing with complaints.

Section A3.1 of the bulletin relating to timeliness to finalise cases outside Schedule 3 is higher than the MSF average and National figure. It is likely the impact of resources and time taken to conduct assessments has affected this figure.

(Norfolk 38 days, MSF 27 and National 25 days)

(Suffolk 38 days, MSF 30 and National 25 days)

It is also reflected in A3.2, the number of working days to finalise allegations. It is more noticeable on outside Schedule 3 cases due to the shorter timescales involved.

To address this and explore better ways of managing dissatisfaction a review of processes and demand was undertaken earlier in 2021. This has led to an uplift in staffing levels and the introduction of Early Intervention Officers whose primary objective is addressing concerns raised at an early stage and developing innovative ways in which we can put things right both for the individual/s concerned and for the future through lessons learned.

It should be noted that this is the first time Forces have been able to see how data is being recorded and it is still early days in terms of data capture.

There are some changes required in our recording to ensure we are consistently aligned in terms of IOPC requirements for data capture with other Forces including our most similar forces.

Some discrepancies in our interpretation seem to be evidenced in A1.3 and the breakdown of allegation sub-categories. This has allowed us to see how we compare and identify areas where we may be recording differently to other Forces.

Finally, in A4.1 Norfolk and Suffolk both record a higher than average number of complaints finalised as NFA's.

Norfolk 27% and Suffolk 22% compared to National figure of 14%.

There has been some discussion on this subject with both OPCC's and with the IOPC Oversight Manger to provide some scrutiny. To date no issues have been raised but this remains under continual review.